The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 40, No. 8, August 2008

Carolina country

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August 2008
Volume 40, No. 8

FEATURES

10 *Natural Gas*
Electric utilities are planning on using natural gas as a fuel for central power generating stations, along with renewable energy and efficiency measures, in an effort to make up for delayed coal-fired and nuclear generation.

12 *Who Was Black Beard?*
A new book reveals lots about the famous North Carolina pirate that we didn't know before.

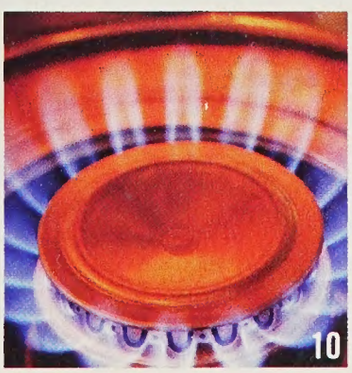
14 *Know Thy Food*
The trend toward buying food locally has supported growth of local farms.

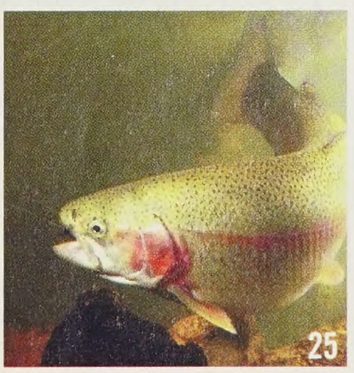
18 *If Students Ran the School*
They say they would arrive in stretch limos, say a prayer, let out for recess, serve chicken nuggets, plant flowers, tutor other students, and ban the bullies.

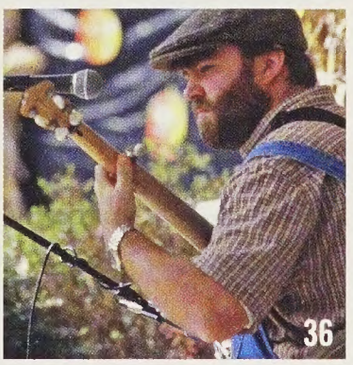
25 *Farm Pond Fishing*
How to get the most pleasure from fishing local farm ponds.

26 *A Granville County Scene*
New art by Ronald Ragland.

ON THE COVER
Tony Phillips is the operations manager at Poplar Ridge Farm in Union County, one of more than 50 farms in the state that offer cooperative membership in the Community-Supported Agriculture program. See pages 14–15. (Photo by Hannah Miller).







FAVORITES

4 **First Person**
Comments on our energy future.

8 **More Power to You**
A proposal to make electricity from northeastern North Carolina forest products.

28 **Tar Heel Lessons**
For students and teachers.

30 **Carolina Country Store**
A guide to our state parks.

31 **Marketplace**

33 **Joyner's Corner**
An enigma.

35 **Carolina Compass**
Adventures in Transylvania County.

38 **Carolina Gardens**
When to prune.

40 **Energy Cents**
Replacing old patio doors.

41 **Classified Ads**

42 **Carolina Kitchen**
Gold Miners Pie, Mint-Chocolate Ice Cream Cake, Cucumber Tea Sandwiches, Bow Ties with Asparagus and Prosciutto.

Carolina country

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North Carolina's electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe and affordable electric service to 850,000 homes, farms and businesses in North Carolina. The 26 electric cooperatives are each member-owned, not-for-profit and overseen by a board of directors elected by the membership.

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HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?

Carolina Country magazine is available monthly to members of North Carolina's electric cooperatives. If you are a member of one of these cooperatives but do not receive Carolina Country, you may request a subscription by calling Member Services at the office of your cooperative. If your address has changed, please inform your cooperative.

We hear you

By Michael E.C. Gery, editor

Since Carolina Country began running more information about major issues facing your cooperative, as well as about the state and national energy picture in general, we have received encouraging comments from members of the state's electric cooperatives. There's no doubt that North Carolina families and businesses are concerned about our energy future.

In June, many of you mailed cards to the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives (our statewide service organization) asking to begin a dialogue with our Congressional representatives. Specifically the "Our Energy, Our Future" cards [Carolina Country, June 2008] are asking Congress about the future of the nation's energy supply, including research for lower emission power plants and what Congress can do to contain energy costs. You will hear politicians and commentators this election season talking about these issues, mainly because you are raising them. Thanks for all your help in getting those cards in and asking Congress the tough questions. Keep it going at: www.ourenergy.coop.

We also hear from many of you who have specific concerns and ideas about our energy future. Here is a sampling of some of the mail, phone messages, and e-mail we have received recently:

- Co-ops should build and invest in power plants run on renewable energy such as solar and wind power.
- Co-ops should pay attention to the hazards of storing waste produced at nuclear power plants.
- Relying on coal-fueled power plants will further contribute to climate change and compromise the environment.
- Consider raising bamboo in the Southeast as an energy source.
- Americans should not be forced to curb our lifestyle and economic progress by cutting back on energy use in order to slow climate change, because China and other nations will not comply with the same standards and thereby will take an economic advantage.
- Why aren't there more electric cars?

North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives and Carolina Country have published material about these issues and we're learning about others related to them. Meantime, we must talk about managing fuel supplies to ensure that electricity is affordable and available when you need it. Also, we reply to as many comments as we can and send articles we have published about these subjects to anyone who is interested.

Our intent has been to inform members on issues affecting cooperatives these days, to report on what co-ops are doing about them, and to emphasize commitment to protecting the interests of consumers.

The best thing about the give-and-take recently is that you are paying attention and are willing to voice your concerns to politicians and to your cooperative's leadership.

There has been and always will be a place for members to express themselves to the people they elect to cooperative boards of directors. There is no other electric utility anywhere that is built on such a democratic foundation. Your elected board members are responsible, devoted citizens of your communities who pledge to manage your cooperative to benefit all members, and to listen to you. As businesses, cooperatives are obligated to communicate with members and to invite response. Just as Carolina Country readers keep us as sharp as we should be, you also help your cooperative serve your interests.

Not for 30 years have issues of energy technology, environmental awareness and cost been as important as they are now. All of us count on you to stay informed and to let us know what you think.

Cooper in awe of the Atlantic

This picture was taken in Atlantic Beach. The young man is my son, Cooper Daniel James, then 3 years old. Cooper and I had taken my mother to visit her sister, who was sick in the hospital in Morehead City. While she visited, we took a nice, relaxing stroll on the beach. Cooper could not wait to get his little feet in the water. The day was beautiful, and the walk with my son was even better.

Melissa James, Roseboro

Let's think for the long term

As a Tideland EMC member, I would like to respond to some issues raised in your July 2008 Carolina Country magazine. I was very glad to see the article on the Iredell County landfill gas plant, and to read the article concerning carbon capture and storage. I feel, though, that you should tell the full story of coal power including the negative effects of mountaintop removal. (It is ironic to read the very loving tribute to Grandfather Mountain in the same issue.)

Carbon dioxide is only one problem with the use of coal as a primary energy source for our nation. The public needs complete information to make the very important choices for our future.

While it is true that electricity rates have a big effect on my pocketbook, and the nation's economy, it is also true that we have painful choices to make regarding how we will leave this planet to our children. Look at how quickly industry (and the public) is responding to high gasoline prices. We are driving less, and high efficiency technology is booming. This is expensive in the short term, but is certainly in our best interest for the long term.

Short-term thinking is what has gotten us into the mess this planet is in. We need organizations such as yours to help lead the people into making the tough choices that will benefit all of our families for the long term.

Gary Mitchell, Ocracoke

North Carolina's EMCs will continue to make power supply choices that provide their member-consumers with the most affordable power in an environmentally responsible way. We also encourage and invest in the new technologies to help meet the needs of North Carolina's energy future. We welcome members' constructive comments.

Nelle Hotchkiss, NCAEC

The pride of Surry County

We have been members of the Surry-Yadkin electric cooperative since 1980. Our family enjoys reading Carolina Country each month and we share it with our family in Texas who are members of the Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative. It is fun to see the scenes you have pictured each month in the "Where in Carolina Country Is This?" The July scene is very familiar to us. It is the road we travel to our church and family cemetery, Pine Hill Friends Meeting. My mother, who is no longer with us, and I would always talk about these well-manicured, unusual-looking shrubs when passing by this home. The folks in Surry County take pride in maintaining their yards and landscaping. Thank you for publishing a "little bit of our world" in Carolina Country.

Mrs. Ruamie Tilton, Pinnacle

How do you grease it?

My late in-laws, Hazel and Ray Church, grew up in northwestern Wilkes County in an area that did not have electricity at the time. In the 1920s, relatives living in Winston-Salem convinced Hazel's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Reeves, to move their family to the city where Mr. Reeves could get a steady job at R.J. Reynolds. One of the advantages was that they would have electricity.

But after a while the family moved back to Wilkes County. Hazel's mother took with them an electric light bulb. When neighbors came to visit, Mrs. Reeves would show them the light bulb and say, "This is where we got our light."

One lady, who had never seen a light bulb before, examined it carefully and asked, "Where do you put the oil in it?"

Bill McInnis, High Point

Editor's note: *Mr. McInnis' story reminds us of the one collected during the oral history project published by the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives in 1985, the 50th anniversary of the Rural Electrification work in the U.S.*

Mary Dryman of Highlands remembered her grandma using her first electric iron. "She'd plug in her iron and let it get good and hot. Test it to see if it was hot enough. Then she'd pull the plug out of the wall and iron as fast as she could! She'd unplug it, iron until it got too cold, then plug it back in again and let it reheat."

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WHERE IN CAROLINA COUNTRY IS THIS?

This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by August 7 with your name, address, phone number and the name of your electric cooperative.

By e-mail: where@carolinacountry.com

Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our September issue, will receive $25.

July winner:
We received a record-breaking number of correct answers (more than 350) identifying the July photo. The scene is of the well-pruned shrubs at J.C. and Vicki Johnson's place on Hwy. 268 in the Pine Hill community, between Pilot Mountain and Level Cross, Surry County. With so many correct entries, it's amazing that the $25 prizewinning one chosen at random was submitted by Mr. Johnson's sister Judy J. Wood of Boonville, a member of Surry-Yadkin EMC.

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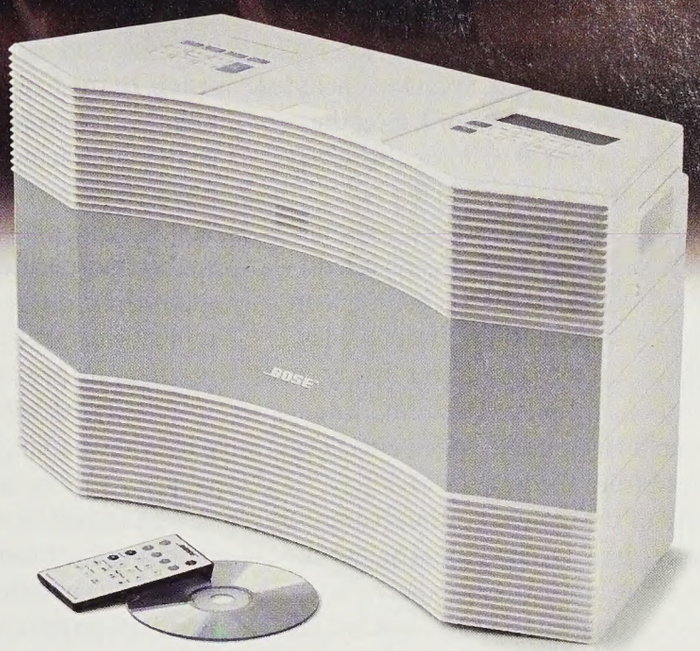

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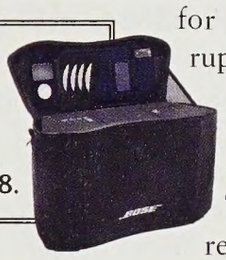

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Co-op linemen show their stuff at Linemen's Rodeo in Raleigh

Linemen from three electric cooperatives participated in the North Carolina Lineman's Rodeo on June 7 at the State Fairgrounds during the N.C. Agriculture Festival. Sponsors included the N.C. Department of Labor, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the N.C. Electric Membership Corporation.

Linemen participating included Junior Seatz, Randy Taylor and Scott Dula from Blue Ridge Electric; Matt Haywood, Jody Keane and Kenny Simmons from Pee Dee EMC; and Donald Neems, Jeff Bolick and Kevin Snead from Piedmont EMC.

All of the demonstrations complied with federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety standards. Linemen used 100 percent fall protection and wore personal protective equipment.

In the Pole Top Rescue demonstration, linemen simulated rescue of an injured lineman from a utility pole. In the Pole Mounted Transformer demonstration, linemen changed out an overhead transformer on a distribution line utility pole, which required climbing and working from a bucket truck. In the Cross Arm Change-Out, linemen removed horizontal cross arms and bracing on a utility pole and replaced them. In the Pad Mounted Transformer demonstration, linemen set, connected and removed a pad mounted transformer, which is typical of the transformers supplying underground power in many neighborhoods.

Pike Electric also participated by performing a Live Line Demonstration, which is a training tool used by the company's safety department to teach employees, customers, paramedics, firefighters and the general public what can happen if electricity is not respected. A transformer backfeeds a three-pole distribution line to 7,200 volts. The demonstration included personal protective equipment, animals in live lines, and trees and limbs in live lines. It actually burned a hot dog to simulate human contact with a live line. The demonstration teaches grounding and other safety precautions.

At the Linemen's Rodeo, electric cooperatives' linemen demonstrate changing out a transformer and a cross arm of a utility pole.

A Hertford County biomass power plant would generate electricity using local forest products

A Florida-based independent power production company has proposed to build a 50-megawatt plant in Hertford County that would burn forest products to generate electricity. Decker International, which operates a similar plant in Craven County, says it selected the Hertford County site near Ahoskie because of the history of managed forests in the area as well as a skilled forest products labor force.

The project would use wastewater from nearby Ahoskie in its cooling process.

As envisioned, the plant would go online by 2011 and employ 20 to 25 full-time employees, as well as some 200 construction jobs and 120 other jobs indirectly.

Hertford Renewable Energy, the Decker International subsidiary proposing the project, conducted a local hearing on the proposal in June. The proposed site is four miles west of Ahoskie off NC Hwy. 11 near Millenium on 99 acres currently cultivated in soybeans and timber. Decker has an option to buy the site. The site is zoned for industrial uses. No residence is within a mile of it.

At the June hearing, conducted in conjunction with the U.S. Rural Utilities Service (which may extend rural economic development financing for the project), Decker vice president Marvin Burchfield said the plant is essentially "carbon-neutral," and he indicated that none of its emissions would exceed federal Clean Air standards.

Hertford Renewable Energy's proposal states that the plant would consume "fuel chips" from residues produced in the local forest products industry. They say they will require about 1.5 tons of the biomass to produce 1 megawatt of electrical energy, which would have the plant running about 8,000 hours per year. Sources of the biomass would be local pulp and paper mills, sawmills, land-clearing operations and timber harvesting. In its proposals, Hertford Renewable Energy says they consider the area "one of the most productive forests in the world." HRE's wood studies report that over 13 million tons of fuel are available annually in the 50-mile radius around the project site.

Decker's Craven County Wood Energy facility near New Bern has been operating since 1991 and uses similar combustion technology, called a grate stoker, to produce steam that turns a turbine-generator. At present that plant is the largest in the southeastern U.S. and sells power to the electricity grid.

The proposal for Hertford County would require constructing wastewater lines to access Ahoskie's wastewater, as well as high-voltage transmission lines. Noise levels at the property line are projected to be below the 75 decibel level required by Hertford County's regulations.

For more information, visit the Rural Utilities Services Web site at: www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/pdf/Decker%20Energy%20HRE%20Alt%20Eval%200508.pdf

Forums look at sea level rise

Roanoke Electric Cooperative is one of nearly 100 northeastern North Carolina and statewide organizations that have supported a series of public forums this summer on the potential effects of sea level rise on the northeastern region of the state.

The Albemarle Pamlico Conservation and Communities Collaborative said in its announcement: "With a growing population and rising sea level, community-based responses are needed to protect our coastal region."

The remaining community forums will be held from 5:30–8:30 p.m. at these locations:

August 4: K.E. White Ctr. (ECSU), 1704 Weeksville Rd., Elizabeth City, (252) 335-4000.

August 5: Edenton Municipal Bldg., 500 S. Broad St., Edenton, (252) 482-2155.

August 11: Green Eco Inspired, 230 Middle St., New Bern, (252) 633-9200.

August 18: Dare County Admin./Annex Bldg., 204 Ananias Dare St., Manteo, (252) 475-5604.

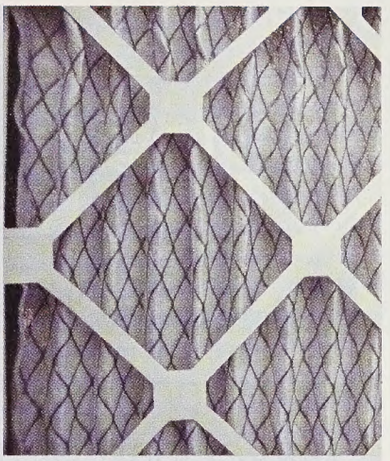
How to use water wisely

According to the American Water Works Association, the average household uses 350 gallons of water a day. The Global Water Foundation suggests the following activities intended to make smarter use of your water, especially during times of drought. For more tips, visit www.globalwaterfoundation.org.

- Wash your car on the grass. This way it will water your lawn at the same time.
- Use ice cubes to help water your plants. Don't toss them in the sink if you drop them on the floor or have some leftover in your glass.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator. You won't have to keep the tap running to wait for cold water.
- Install a low-flow faucet aerator on all household sinks and save 1–2 gallons of water per minute. You can purchase these small fixtures for just a few dollars at your local home improvement store and easily install them by hand.
- Use the garbage disposal sparingly. Try starting a compost pile and use it when you plant, which will add water-holding organic material to the soil.
- Consider installing water-saving features throughout your home. Using more efficient water fixtures can reduce your daily use by 35 percent.
- Look for water-saving models when purchasing new appliances.

Try This!

Q: Is it true that pleated air filters increase my air quality and the efficiency of my HVAC system?



Some pleated return air filters can alter the resistance to airflow in your HVAC system.

A: Many homeowners who seek better indoor air quality use pleated return air filters to trap dust and other allergens. While these filters are often marketed as high efficiency models, they can cause a harmful change in the static pressure of the HVAC unit. Static pressure is a measure of resistance to airflow. If resistance is too high, the amount of system airflow is reduced and the HVAC system is left gasping for air. If the static pressure exceeds design conditions, it can lead to premature failure of the heat exchanger. On the cooling side, common complaints include the coil freezing and high head pressures. Failure to change or clean a dirty filter can result in these same problems.

To ensure proper system balance, an HVAC technician can measure the pressure drop across your coil or heat exchanger and compare it to the manufacturer's rating to determine the maximum amount of filter resistance allowed. If your system's current system design cannot accommodate a pleated filter, you can increase the number or size of return air registers or install a separate air cleaner independent of your HVAC unit.

Remember: as filters fill up air flow is increasingly restricted. Therefore, check your filters every 30 days regardless of marketing claims and replace them as needed.

Source. The Electric Cooperatives of Eastern North Carolina

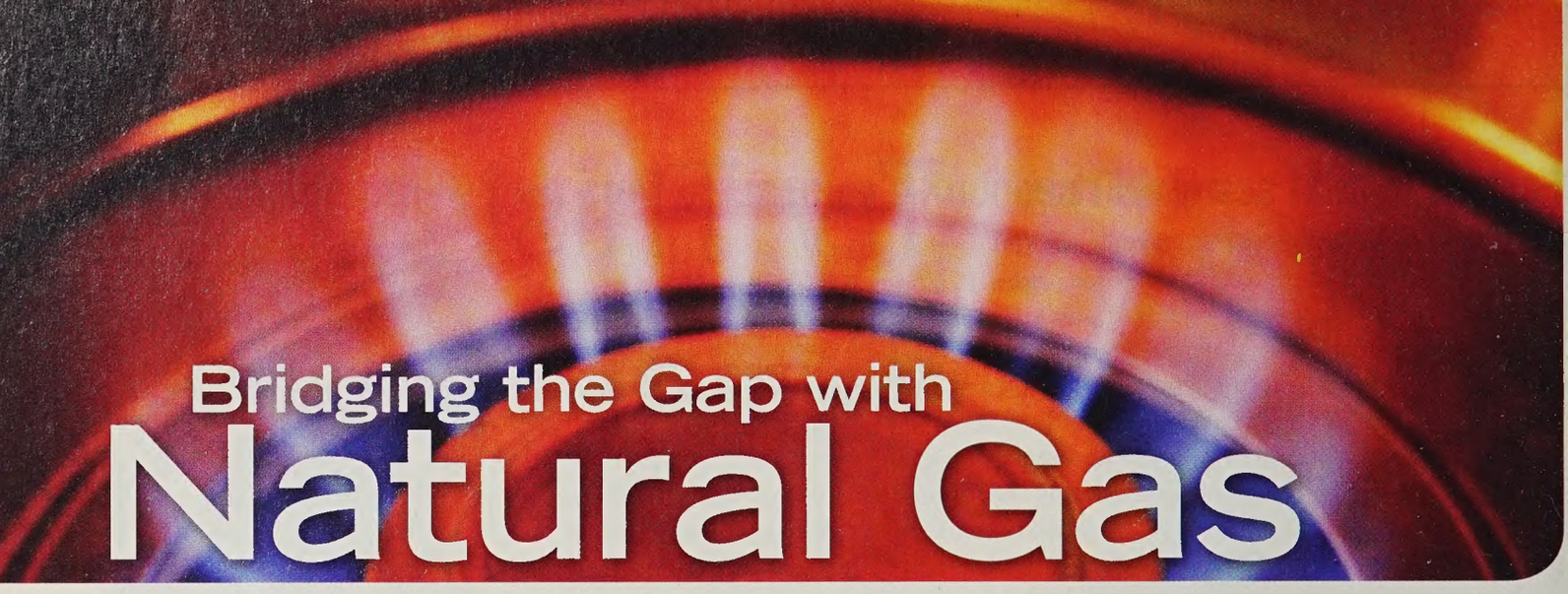
Can you help others save energy?

Send your conservation ideas or questions to us.

P.O.Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611, or E-mail: editor@carolinacountry.com

Try This! (feedback)

A member of Union Power Cooperative, Carol Wagner of Matthews, appreciated the "Try This!" information last month on fans. She asked which direction ceiling fan blades should run for maximum energy efficiency. According to ENERGY STAR (U.S. Department of Energy), run a ceiling fan in the counter-clockwise direction in summer to blow air downward so that the cool air at the lower level can be spread into every corner of the room. In the winter, reverse the motor and operate the ceiling fan at low speed in the clockwise direction to draw air upward, forcing warm air near the ceiling down into the occupied space. If you don't get the effect in far corners of the room, you can periodically switch the direction to stir the air. Remember to adjust your thermostat when using your ceiling fan.



Bridging the Gap with Natural Gas

The nation's electric utilities are including natural gas generation as a bigger part of resource plans, along with renewable energy and efficiency measures, in an effort to make up for delayed coal-fired and nuclear generation.

By Scott Gates

Fossil fuels are the backbone of the nation's energy supply. Almost half of all our electricity comes from burning coal, and oil remains the dominant transportation fuel option—even if today it costs an arm and a leg.

A third type of fossil fuel, natural gas, is increasingly in the spotlight. In addition to its use for home heating and cooking, natural gas has surged as a way to keep your lights on amidst steadily growing demand for electricity.

"Natural gas-fired power plants are presently an easier option than building a coal or nuclear plant," says John Holt, senior principal for generation and fuel at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). "You can manufacture the parts for gas turbines quicker, and site and build a facility more rapidly—and with less opposition. If other types of generation are ruled out, as is becoming commonplace, natural gas becomes the only alternative left for a reliable baseload power supply."

By 2012, it is anticipated that a little more than 35,000 megawatts (mw) of new generation will come on-line nationwide as new power plants are built to meet growing demand, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Natural gas will be used to generate more of that power as plans for coal-fired plants are challenged in the political arena. The risk with gas, however, is that it relies on an increasingly scarce—and expensive—fuel source.

Natural gas emits about half the carbon dioxide as coal when burned—1,135 pounds of it for every 1,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity generated versus 2,249 pounds of CO_2 that burning coal emits at present. For this reason, and for the relative ease of building a natural gas-fired plant, more than half of the 21,000 mw that electric cooperatives nationally expect to add over the next 10 years will be gas-fired.

Modern natural gas plants are similar in size to coal-fired cousins. The average U.S. coal-fired plant has a 600-mw capacity, while an average new, combined cycle natural gas plant has a comparable 500-mw capacity.

Last spring, Associated Electric Cooperative, a Springfield, Mo.-based generation and transmission (G&T) co-op serving six other regional G&Ts and 51 distribution co-ops in three states, scrapped plans for a 660-mw coal plant that had been three years in the making. Costs ratcheted up 30 percent while permits were being processed, due to skyrocketing prices of basic building materials like concrete and steel.

"The timing was unfortunate," says Roger Clark, director of member services and corporate communications at Associated Electric. "Our resource plan now focuses on natural gas alternatives. We have a combined cycle unit that we purchased several years ago that has never been constructed—that's certainly one option we're looking very closely at."

G&Ts in similar situations across the country are including natural gas generation as a bigger part of resource plans, along with renewable energy and efficiency measures, in an effort to make up for delayed coal-fired and nuclear generation.

The North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation (NCEMC), a G&T that supplies wholesale power to some of the state's electric cooperatives, completed the installation of 620 megawatts of gas-fired combustion turbines in the winter of 2007. These units were added to the resource mix and will be used to meet peak energy needs on hot summer days and cold winter days. Additionally, NCEMC and the cooperatives' newly-formed renewable energy and efficiency co-op (GreenCo Solutions) continue to evaluate the use of renewable resources and energy efficiency as viable solutions to the future needs.

"Because it takes a long time to build coal or nuclear, natural gas must pick up much of the slack," says NRECA's Holt. "Where it may take six or seven years to build a coal plant after permitting and construction and 10 years or more to get a nuclear plant up and running, a natural gas generator can be brought into service relatively quickly."

Simple gas-fired turbines—similar to jet engines on blocks—can be built in approximately 18 months. A

combined-cycle unit that creates steam for extra generation can be up and running in just two years. And because a natural gas plant can be "fired up" relatively quickly and operates less expensively than generators running on diesel fuel, they've long been the choice for "peaking plants"—power stations called on during times of high electricity use to supplement baseload coal and nuclear plants.

In the mid- to late 1990s, electric cooperatives turned to gas-fired turbines to keep lights on and air conditioners humming during high-demand periods.

"Co-ops put in more gas turbines in five years than they had put during the previous 60 years of the rural electrification program," explains Holt. "It met their needs for peaking power. However, the problem with relying on gas for baseload power is its price volatility and expense.

The cost and supply of natural gas

As demand for electricity surges, so does the price of natural gas. Natural gas prices, therefore, turn an otherwise quick fix to the problem of meeting demand into more of a gamble. The price has tripled since 2002 and jumped 93 percent since August 2007 alone.

Price fluctuations in natural gas really come down to a matter of what is available compared to what is being used. In 2006, the United States used 21.6 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, with 29 percent going to electric power, according to EIA. Of that amount, 19 percent was imported, most of which came via pipeline from Canada. The remainder was drawn from rapidly dwindling domestic resources.

EIA pegs U.S. natural gas reserves at 211 trillion cubic feet. BP, which also keeps tabs on global resources, gauges the figure at 209 trillion. If natural gas consumption continues at its current rate without an increase in imports, our national reserves will be tapped out within about 10 years.

This leaves the future of natural gas supply hinging on imported liquefied natural gas (LNG), which is essentially methane that has been cooled for easier long-distance transport. The United States currently get the majority of its LNG imports from Trinidad, in the Caribbean, Qatar in the Middle East, and the African countries of Egypt, Algeria, and Nigeria.

If plans for new coal and nuclear plants continue to be replaced in favor of natural gas plants over the next few decades, these imports will undoubtedly increase.

"LNG from overseas would account for 30 percent of U.S. electricity generation," says Mike Ganley, NRECA director of strategic planning & analysis. "From a political standpoint alone, this sets the stage where supply disruptions could dramatically impact electricity prices."

Electric cooperatives are tackling local generation problems with what resources are available, bridging the gap between now and when advanced low-emissions power generation technologies become available in the future. Natural gas will help in this effort, although to what extent remains a weighted question with potentially broad-reaching impacts.

"We have some tough decisions to make in the next 10 years," says Roger Clark at Associated Electric. "How we get through this is going to make a huge difference."

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Energy Information Administration, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, National Energy Technology Laboratory, BP plc, Associated Electric Cooperative.

Scott Gates writes on technology and energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Natural Gas Imports

If natural gas consumption continues at current rates without an increase in imports, domestic reserves in the United States will be tapped out in about 10 years, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration estimates.

"The future of natural gas supply hinges on liquefied natural gas [LNG] imports," says Ken Kern, a director at the National Energy Technology Laboratory. The United States currently gets the majority of its LNG from Trinidad, in the Caribbean, and the African countries of Egypt, Nigeria and Algeria.

Double-hulled tanker ships bring the resource to specially designed terminals dotting the U.S. coastline—six are currently receiving imports, from Freeport, Texas, to Everett, Maine. A terminal in Puerto Rico also serves North America.

Once unloaded, the liquid gets transferred by pressurized, heavily insulated trucks to storage facilities. Also, heaters at some docks warm LNG into its natural state for pumping into a pipeline. The resulting gas can be burned for electricity, as well as used in homes for heating and cooking.

Several LNG terminals are in development in anticipation of the country's coming reliance on imported natural gas. Another 40 such projects are being discussed, according to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

One LNG risk is that foreign sellers can divert a tanker carrying it at sea to higher-paying customers anywhere on the globe. That means demand for natural gas alone may not be enough to bring tankers ashore.

The Last Days of Black Beard the Pirate

How much of what we learned about the pirate is really true?

"The Last Days of Black Beard the Pirate" is 240 pages with more than 75 photographs, maps and illustrations. Kevin P. Duffus, a filmmaker and investigative journalist of historical events, also wrote "Shipwrecks of the Outer Banks, An Illustrated Guide." The book sells for $30 in bookstores and signed copies are available from Looking Glass Productions, P.O. Box 98985, Raleigh, NC 27624. Phone (800) 647-3536. Web: www.thelostlight.com

We have a pretty good idea what the famous pirate Black Beard was doing in this month of August 290 years ago. He was in the busy port of Philadelphia planning to give up piracy on the high seas and return to the life of a respectable colonial American citizen. Most likely, he also drank a few ales at the Blue Anchor tavern and visited a blonde Swedish lady friend he knew named Margaret. And he probably sought medical attention for the syphilis that lately had contributed to his rages and overall confusion.

Anchored out on the Delaware River in August 1718, his sloop "Adventure" held about 25 of Black Beard's crew. Even though all of them had recently been granted a pardon forgiving them of their piratical crimes during the previous two years, their captain forbade them to disembark and attract attention to themselves in the city. Philadelphians knew that only two months earlier, these men were among about 300 in four armed ships under Black Beard's command who for four days had blockaded the port of Charleston, S.C., raiding nine vessels and holding prominent citizens hostage, while demanding nothing more than a chest of medicines that their captain insisted on having. And two days later, the pirate captain chose this crew to help deliberately run aground and sink two of their own sailing fleet, including their 40-gun flagship "Queen Anne's Revenge," at Old Topsail Inlet near Cape Lookout, leaving hundreds of their fellow pirates high and dry.

We know all this—and much more about Black Beard that has never before been told—thanks to a new book about the pirate who most of us know was beheaded while holing up at Ocracoke Island. Author Kevin Duffus, a member of Haywood EMC who works in Raleigh, took years researching and writing "The Last Days of Black Beard the Pirate" and has published a work that examines and sets straight virtually all the legends associated with the man called "the boldest and most ruthless corsair of them all." The inaccurate, mythical stories of the pirate, Duffus says, are "not nearly as interesting as the truth."

Widely considered the most feared of pirates during the Golden Age of Piracy (about 1660s–1720s), Black Beard's supposed adventures, behavior and appearance have thrilled people of all ages and enhanced lots of marketing schemes since they first were told in the early 1800s. Beginning then and growing wildly for nearly 200 years, many of the stories are exaggerated or wrong. Did he have 13 or 14 wives? Did he board ships brandishing a cutlass and pistol while sticks in his beard flamed and smoked? Did he shoot crew members occasionally just to remind his men who's boss?

Duffus addresses all this and more. We come to understand, for example, why he was known as Edward Teach and Edward Thatch. We learn exactly why he was so familiar with the sloughs, channels and shoals of Pamlico Sound. We get to know his closest allies, all respectable eastern North Carolina men, many of whom remained so even after their pirate days had ended. We find out that he was not some poor, uneducated chap who went to sea as a common sailor, and that he had a sister Susie.

Most of all we can read what actually happened during the final six months of Black Beard's two-year career as a pirate, what he and his cohorts did in and around Beaufort, Bath and Ocracoke before the bloody battle of Nov. 22, 1718, at what is known as Teach's Hole.

—Michael E.C. Gery

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Know Thy

A trend toward buying locally-grown food brings out the best in local farms

Story and photos by Hannah Miller

When Laura Benoit opens the bag of produce she gets regularly from Laughing Owl Farm, she never knows what delights she'll find inside. She retrieves her bag at the Charlotte Tailgate Farmers Market on West Park Avenue, which is the designated drop-off point for Laughing Owl Farm, located in Stanly County

"It's like Christmas every week," she says. Laura is a baker in Charlotte who is on her second year of Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) membership. She says she looks forward each week to getting "all sorts of great, awesome things. Super-duper-delicious garlic, lettuces, spinach. I get eggs. I love his eggs."

Laura Benoit is one of the hundreds of North Carolinians who, in essence, have become partners with their region's farmers by signing up as members of the farms' CSA co-ops. They pay a set fee in advance to share in the farm's bounty over a certain number of weeks. Owner Dean Mullis of Laughing Owl, whose CSA season runs May-October, says, "It gives us working capital in the spring when we're planting crops." It enables Laughing Owl, he says, "to get started, order seeds, order drip irrigation lines." Laughing Owl's fee is $600, $690 if members opt for a dozen eggs weekly from free-range hens.

The risks of farming are shared along with the bounty as customers receive what's in season. "We're at the mercy of Mother Nature," says Tony Phillips, operations manager at Poplar Ridge Farm in Union County. If there's not enough spinach to go around to all the CSA members, he'll give them a mix, filling out their allotted bushel with Bibb lettuce or green lettuce.

"The amount varies in weight and volume and value depending on the time of year," explains Sammy Koenigsberg, who with his wife Melinda runs New Town Farms in Union County. "The value works out over the whole season." As for the weekly amount, "A bushel is probably a good average," he says.

The popularity of local food

CSAs, which sprang up in Japan and Europe before appearing in the U.S., have grown along with the nationwide trend toward locally-grown, often organic food. Localharvest.com, a national Web site devoted to locally grown and organic agriculture, reported some 50 in 1990. Now, there are more than that in North Carolina alone. The Pittsboro-based Carolina Farm Stewardship Association's online guide to local and organic farms lists 56, up from 41 in 2006.

The demand is far outstripping the number of CSAs. Kathleen Purvis, the food editor of The Charlotte Observer, recently got up early to buy eggs from one farmer at a farmers market, only to find his supply limited because the rest was reserved for his CSA customers. "Want to sign up to be on that CSA, too?" she asked in an Observer column. "Too bad, Bertha—get in line."

When New Town Farms, one of North Carolina's CSA pioneers, had four openings this year, it filled them from a waiting list of more than 75 people.

Elizabeth Gibbs of Firefly Farm in Celo advises people who want to join a CSA to do it at the end of the previous year's growing season. Even though her farm added 16 new slots this year, she soon found herself saying all too often, "I'm sorry. We're filled."

Electric co-ops are "partners"

An unseen partner of the farms as they meet the growing CSA demand are the electric co-ops in their areas. Produce is cooled by air-conditioning units and refrigerated coolers during North Carolina's sweltering summers. Irrigation lines are powered by pumps. And for some farmers, electricity runs the golf carts and scooters used to navigate their acreage.

At Laughing Owl, New Town and Poplar Ridge, the co-op is Union Power Cooperative in Monroe. French Broad Electric Membership in Marshall serves Firefly Farm.

At New Town, a golf cart and well pump run on electricity from Union Power. "Today," says Koenigsberg, "we have everything we picked in a room of the barn with an air conditioning unit." At Firefly, "we start our peppers and tomatoes early" before the summer sun can warm them, says Gibbs. Electricity offers both heat and light for germination in their greenhouse.

At Firefly, Laughing Owl and Poplar Ridge, coolers keep

the produce fresh until it can be dropped off or picked up. "Broccoli must be on ice and refrigerated," notes Marianne Battistone, who with her husband, Philip Norwood, runs Poplar Ridge. Poplar Ridge offers a choice of CSAs: the produce CSA, and also a cut-flower CSA, with the flowers grown on the farm and chilled, along with the produce, in an 8 by 10-foot refrigerated unit. The farm also offers poultry, eggs and pork on a CSA basis. They're raised by other farmers and kept cool in Poplar Ridge's unit.

"I'm turning this whole farm electric," Battistone vowed as she watched gas prices rise earlier this year. At $4 per gallon, she said, gas and diesel for the farm would cost her $150 a week. "If you hope to break even, the last thing you need is to spend $150 a week in gas."

She already had taken steps. Employees park their vehicles and make their way across the farm on bicycles. She herself rides a battery-powered scooter, and she planned to order another. An ATV that pulls a trailer to haul manure to Poplar Ridge's compost heap would be traded in for two electric carts, she said.

Battistone, who grows for 70 CSA customers, had high praise for Union Power. "When we have problems they come fast," she said. She has the direct phone numbers of employees to call in case of emergencies, she said. "We know them by name. You can't imagine how important that is to me."

Connecting people and food

Marianne Battistone's CSA grew out of her own interest in health and nutrition. A former dancer and longtime fitness consultant, she commutes to New York as a contributing editor on health and fitness at Self magazine. She and her husband, Philip Norwood, first put in eight beds of plants to feed themselves healthfully, then decided to sell their produce, grown without synthetic chemicals, directly through a CSA.

It's that interest in healthy eating that's driving the current popularity of CSAs, says Sammy Koenigsberg, whose farm is certified organic. "People in CSAs know more about where their food comes from than even people who shop with us at the farmers market," he says. "They've been to the farm." New Town requires new members to take a farm tour. Before logistics prevented it, some members worked in the fields in exchange for a discount.

Michelle Leek, a CSA member of Laughing Owl Farm, works one day a week in the field on the farm's grounds near Richfield in northern Stanly County. The rest of the week she spends in sales with Grateful Growers Farm, a specialist in naturally grown poultry and pork located in Denver, N.C. At Laughing Owl, she says, "I weed and prune. And play with the geese."

Connecting consumers with the source of their food was one of the reasons the Koenigsbergs pioneered their CSA back in 1990. "If people knew their food came from the soil, they'd care more about the soil," says Koenigsberg. That disconnection, he believes, is behind many of the problems that beset the environment. Believing that CSAs have a communications role, he sends out a weekly newsletter to members. It touches on agricultural issues but also educates in another way, familiarizing people with foods they've never seen before. Being small, the farms that supply CSAs can afford to experiment, and the gourmet restaurants that many of them supply often demand it.

Koenigsberg grows 80 to 90 different things. When a CSA member opens a box, he or she may find kohlrabi, Koenigsberg says, "or a weird potato. Fennel."

At the Tailgate market, Michelle Leek was picking up, among other things, long fronds called garlic scapes, which Dean Mullis explained were the top part of the garlic plant, used in salads.

And Laura Benoit confessed that her weekly grab-bag of goodies from Laughing Owl is putting a new taste in her life—radishes. "They're growing on me slowly," she admitted.

Hannah Miller is a Carolina Country contributing writer who lives in Charlotte.

Far left: T.J. Rohrer, employee of Poplar Ridge Farm in Union County, carries broccoli from the walk-in cooler powered by Union Power Cooperative.

Above left: Poplar Ridge CSA members received a box of collards and bok choy brightened with marigolds.

Lower left: At the Charlotte Tailgate Farmers Market, Ed Globowski, a member of Laughing Owl Farm's CSA, picks up a share that he splits with another member.

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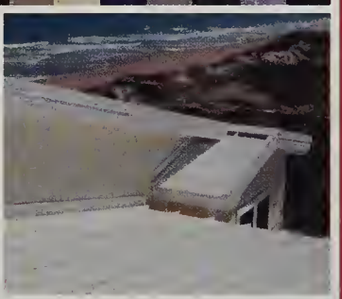

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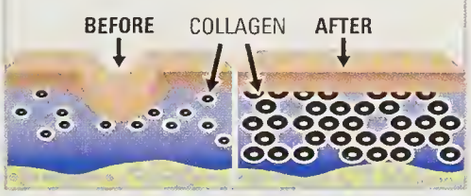

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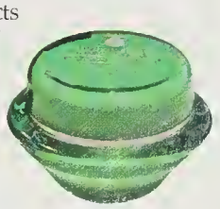

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If We Ran the School

Students would arrive in stretch limos, say a prayer, let out for recess, serve chicken nuggets for lunch, plant flowers, tutor other students, and ban the bullies

Superhero curriculum

If I ran my school, everyone would read comic books, so they would know about superheroes. At recess we would watch superhero movies. In kindergarten, they'd learn about Spiderman and Friends. First graders would learn about Batman. Second graders: Flash, the fastest man alive. In third grade: Superman. Fourth grade: The Fantastic 4. Fifth grade: Just Spiderman. Sixth grade: Iron Man. Seventh grade: Super Villains. Eighth grade: X-men. Ninth grade: Green Lantern. Tenth grade: Zorro. Eleventh grade: The Hulk. Twelfth grade: The Incredible Hulk.

And when they graduate, they all will be a Superhero Freak, like I am.

Holden Huffman, Lenoir

The cool school

If I ran my school, it would be cool.
If you walked in, you would drop to your knees and drool.
I would build a Burger King, McD's and Taco Bell.
When you walk in, you would think, "What the...?"
My school would make you all act-a-fool
and make you drool.
It would be just plain out cool.

Zach Crowe, Perquimans County

Thanks to all the students and teachers who sent us student ideas for what they would do if they ran their schools. You can see more at our Web site. Next month we'll publish a gallery of your favorite photos. (Deadline was July 15.) For more themes and the rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 19.

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Pets, pizza, flowers, jewelry

Pets could come to school everyday. Everyone would go skating every Friday. I would get people who caused trouble. I would walk around the classrooms to see who is doing good. We would have hamburgers, pizza and veggies everyday for lunch. I would stop kids from running. I would have beautiful flowers all around. I would see people learning to read and write. I would help people and wear lots of jewelry.

Ashleigh McCoy, Marshville, Pee Dee EMC

New rules

An opportunity for a 14-year-old to run his or her own school is a dream come true. If I were to run Weldon High School, I would first remodel our whole school because it is really old. I would make sure that our school has a pool placed in the gym along with a pool table, exercise equipment and a vending machine full of refreshments for only five cents, anything you want.

As for breakfast and lunch, our school will serve sausage, bacon and eggs, grits, and all kinds of breakfast juices. For lunch, chicken nuggets, fries, steak and healthy fruits and vegetables. That's just some of the stuff that would be served.

Students would be able to wear anything they like to school as long as it isn't gang-related. If a fight occurs, the person who threw the first lick will be suspended for three days while the other will remain going to school.

The 9th through 12th grades will each have four basic classes such as algebra, English, and history. And they will have two electives of their choice, such as gym, art and horticulture.

There will be a 15-minute break in between classes, including smoking breaks. If students are caught smoking illegal drugs in school other than cigarettes, they will be escorted from the school and suspended for one month with unexcused absences.

Shanika Deloatch, Roanoke Rapids

Luke, Kolby and Seth waiting for the school bus.

Fishing, bubblegum and dogs

As students of Stanly County School, we would take a day off to go fishing. We would play baseball in PE everyday. Each child would receive free lunch. We would go on a field trip every month.

If we ran the school, students would be allowed to wear sunglasses and chew bubblegum. Each student would have a computer laptop and a flat-screen TV in every classroom. Our dog, Sassie, would be in the class.

Dorothy Steele, Lilesville, Pee Dee EMC

Healthy, clean and fun

I would make it a fun place to be where the students would want to come all the time. If the teachers would make learning more fun, then the students who have a hard time making good grades would enjoy coming to school. The students that make good grades find school work easy and love coming to school. It seems that the ones that struggle to make good grades hate school. I would have well-trained tutors to help these students.

I would change the attitude of the teachers to not fuss at the kids so much. They need talk to them and treat them like they would want to be talked to and treated.

I would enforce that there be no bad language, and fighting would not be tolerated.

I would have a healthy, clean school that has no bugs or mice. It would have healthy food, clean classrooms and clean bathrooms.

Jordan Rice, Spring Lake, South River EMC

A real liberal school

I would have skateboarding half pipes everywhere. My school would have a game dome with a PS3 and an Xbox 360. My school would have ATVs for every student and an ATV safety class where you would learn to drive and race the ATVs. There would be a paintball class and paintball fields to use during PE.

At lunch you could order anything you wanted to eat and you wouldn't have to pay for it. You could chew gum, eat in class and bring dogs and cats to school.

Junior McGee, Granite Falls

Pay teachers more

Everybody loves Franklin Academy, and we all think it is the best school ever, but we as the students would make just a few changes. We could make reading class from two hours to one, and then the second hour we can read our A/R books. It would be like study hall just for reading. Students would get a red card for not reading books in the second hour of reading.

I think that the teachers should be paid more. They are very important to the school and the students and community. The teachers often have to buy their own supplies in order to teach. Sometimes the needs of the students are bigger than the teacher's pocketbook. I would like to see the teachers make more money, because they are very important.

Alfred D'Ottavio, Wake Forest

Let kids be kids

Our teachers would be allowed to challenge our young minds instead of teaching only what is on the state End of Year Test.

We would take field trips to the many educational places that North Carolina has to offer. We would be allowed to be kids and not mini-adults. We would be allowed to make mistakes and learn from them and not be harshly judged and expected to think like adults. We would have the opportunity to socialize with our peers. And we would definitely have better lunches.

Ashley Stalnaker, Kinston, Tri-County EMC

Prayer, paddling, manners

Morning prayer would be the first thing we would start off with. There would be no time out—just old-timey paddling for discipline problems. Bible reading and manners would be taught to everyone. We would have longer lunches and less homework.

Hunter Downing, Raeford, Lumbee River EMC

send us your best EARN $50

Here are the themes in our **"Nothing Could Be Finer"** series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you $50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

October 2008
Celebrity Presidents
What celebrity–human or cartoon–would make the best President, & why?
Deadline: August 15

November 2008
The Techno Whiz
Your craziest experience with home electronics.
Deadline: September 15

December 2008
Holiday Recipes
Recipes for your favorite holiday meals.
Deadline: October 15

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 800 pixels.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
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Rock your vote

By Linda Wacyk

Do your children know why it is important to vote?

They could, if we make time this month to find out what our kids understand about elections and get them involved. Election season offers the perfect "teachable moment" to help children understand the rights and responsibilities that come with democratic citizenship.

Citizenship—Use it or lose it?

Surveys reveal serious gaps in the citizenship education of young Americans. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports that the majority of 12th-graders have only a basic knowledge of government and citizenship in the U.S. Too few can show they have learned enough to participate responsibly in the political system.

Teaching our children to be good citizens goes beyond teaching them to obey the laws of the land. We should also teach them about how their freedoms began and how they're maintained. Young people need to understand that they can make a difference, and that if they don't become involved democratic citizens, they risk losing their free way of life.

The family that votes together...

Good schools can bring the principals and lessons of democracy into every subject. But home is the perfect setting to model the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Most older students acknowledge the importance of voting and campaigning in public elections, but they also tend to express low levels of political interest and fail to see that their political actions make a difference. The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds voting in public elections lags far behind the rate for those over age 25.

Want to get started?

Here are a few ideas for showing your children what democracy looks like in action:

- ☑ Participate in the political system and volunteer for community service projects. Invite your child to join you.
- ☑ Require children to "contribute to the common good" of the family by assigning regular chores.
- ☑ Behave democratically with your children. At least some of the time, allow children to decide what they learn and do, so they can learn how to share power and control.
- ☑ Practice respect. Without respect, democracy cannot exist.
- ☑ Promote your power to make a difference. No single person can change the world, but you can do what's possible within your circle of influence.
- ☑ Monitor and reinforce at home the lessons learned in school about the responsibilities of citizenship.
- ☑ Discuss newspaper articles and current events, especially those that affect children.
- ☑ Talk about campaign ads and ballot issues. Invite your kids to ask questions and dig deeper into what candidates say.
- ☑ Take your children with you when you vote. Talk about why you voted the way you did.
- ☑ Go to a school board meeting together.
- ☑ Read biographies of people who are good examples of democratic citizens.

Linda Wacyk is a freelance writer from Michigan who enjoys writing stories related to education and kids (of any age). Even more, she's enjoying being a first-time grandma.

'C' is for Citizenship

Americans' guaranteed right to participate in politics and democracy means little when most citizens fail to exercise it. Here are some resources that can help.

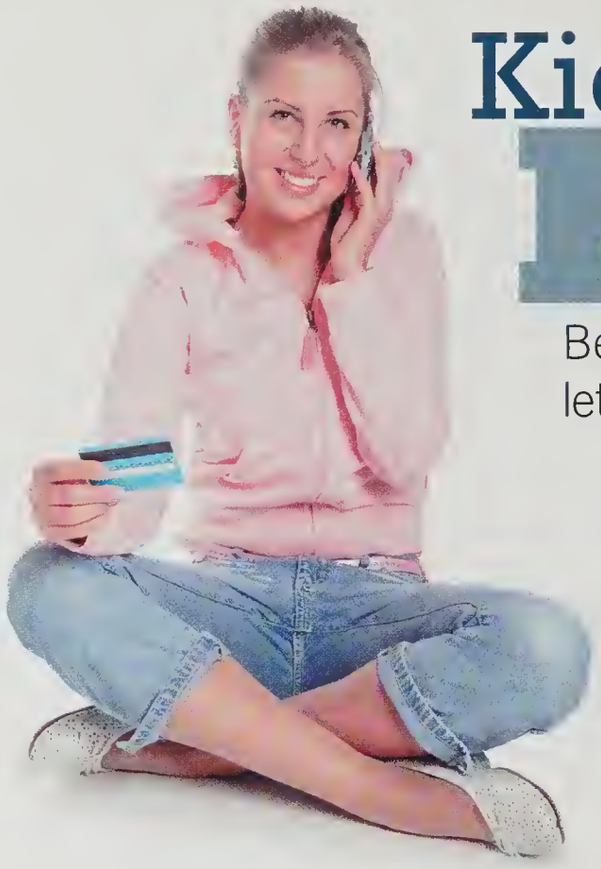
KidsVotingUSA Family Guide www.kidsvotingusa.org/images/FamilyGuide.pdf
Available in English and Spanish, the guide offers activities the entire family can do together to learn about democracy and the value of being an involved citizen.

MI Kids! www.michigan.gov/mikids
Offers all kinds of interesting facts and fun activities for kids, including sections on how a bill becomes a law and how voting works.

Rock the Vote www.rockthevote.org
A teen-friendly site by a nonpartisan organization dedicated to protecting freedom of expression and to helping young people use their power to affect change in their communities.

Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government http://bensguide.gpo.gov
Learn about government branches, citizenship and how laws are made with Ben Franklin as your host. Interactive games and articles provide information in a fun way.

Project Vote Smart www.vote-smart.org/index.htm
Contains a comprehensive database of political candidates and elected officials. Also includes links to other Web sites with information on government and politics.



Kids Going Plastic

Better to teach teenagers about credit cards than let them run wild with yours

By Linda Wacyk

According to studies, many teens leave school no wiser than a preschooler about personal finance. I still remember the day when my small son, angry at being denied some coveted purchase, pointed at my wallet and fumed, "You can, too, buy it. Just write one of those checks in there!"

By the time he left for college, my son had a job and a checking account, so he understood money matters a little better. We took the leap, and like his sisters before him, he opened a low-limit credit card with the promise that he would pay off balances as soon as they were due. While not without risk, this option provided convenience for our college kids and for us. Plus, it taught them to manage credit and establish credit records.

Card issuers target teens

Credit card companies have always marketed heavily on college campuses. Now they are swooping down on even younger consumers. They know that the 31.3 million teens in the U.S. are working and spending their own earnings—as well as plenty of mom's and dad's. In 2006, teens shelled out $195 billion of their own money, compared with $94 billion in 1999, according to a Harris group survey.

So, it's not surprising that companies marketing co-signed credit cards to high school juniors and seniors. Failings come to parents offering credit limits as low as $200, so these cards offer some level of protection; but they often come with stiff interest rates, and parents are legally responsible for the accounts.

Prepaid cards—allowances for the 21st century?

This year's college freshmen have what some parents consider an even better tool to help them manage their money. Companies like Allow Card of America, Inc., are unveiling prepaid credit cards created specifically for kids and teens.

Parents apply for a prepaid credit card in their child's name, and deposit money into the account to activate it. Children can then use their card anywhere Visa or MasterCard is accepted. When the card is used to make a purchase, that amount is deducted from the card balance. When the card balance is low, parents can reload the card from their checking account or credit card.

Prepaid cards often come with extra features, such as online account controls and tools, financial lessons and interactive games designed to teach fiscal responsibility.

Parents—the anti-debt

At the heart of good prepaid programs is parental control. From online portals, parents can monitor and load the cards 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week. (Especially helpful for answering those panicked midnight calls for extra cash.) The Allow Card, in particular, offers over 35 parental controls, allowing parents to set parameters for their teens' spending. The site even allows parents to lockout specific merchant categories, so teens can't spend money at undesired locations.

Young people win, sponsors say, because the cards help kids get a grasp of their allowance and finances, establish a better sense of trust with their parents and learn valuable life lessons, while still giving them financial independence.

Parents win because they have a better way to give and track allowance monies. Plus, kids have a better way to pay for their needs in a way that is safer than carrying cash. Because of the nature of the debit system, teens can't over-spend their account and rack up debt.

But, buyer beware. Fees can add up fast. Prepaid credit cards for children do not help build a credit history because account records are not reported to the credit bureaus. And if the parents don't teach their children the proper use of credit cards, it can lead to debt problems when they are old enough to get a real credit card.

Credit $ource Online suggests some guidelines for responsible use of credit cards:

- ☑ Be clear about what your child can and can't use the card for.
- ☑ Teach children to use their credit card only for things they would be willing to pay for with cash.
- ☑ Track transactions and balances in the register. Don't forget to include debit card or ATM fees.
- ☑ Collect all sales receipts to prevent a thief from using the information to make purchases.
- ☑ Go over monthly statements with your child and monitor spending habits.
- ☑ If the card is lost or stolen, contact the card issuer immediately to cancel the card.
- ☑ Sit down with children and show them what fees and interest can cost over time.

No degree? No Problem

Jobs are out there, but you need to learn before you can earn.

By Linda Wacyk

Today's college graduates, on average, will out-earn high school graduates by $1 million over their lifetimes. And that's nothing compared to the lifetime earning disparity between a college grad and a high school dropout.

But does everyone have to go to college to make a decent living? Many experts in career planning say, "not exactly."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, eight of the top 10 fastest growing occupations through 2014 do not require a bachelor's degree. Also, these jobs, which include plumbing, firefighting, automotive repair, and health technology, are less likely to be outsourced.

As America's baby boomers go gray, the health care field is ripe with job opportunity, from registered nurses to home health care aids. In some areas, employment for licensed practical nurses (LPNs) is growing faster than average, particularly in the home health sector. In 2004, LPNs earned just under $34,000 on average. Since that time, salaries have continued to grow steadily.

Top job-growth sectors

It can pay to pick a field wisely. The High Growth Job Training Initiative by the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) attempts to match potential workers to fields that have jobs and solid career paths left open due to a lack of people qualified to fill them. The ETA has identified 14 "high-growth, high-demand industries," which in addition to health care include fields with entry-level positions that don't require degrees—fields like automotive, construction, information technology (IT) and energy.

Depending on where they live, trained automotive service technicians can make $20,000–$30,000 in their first year and after a year or two, up to $50,000. After eight years, and further training, master technicians could make $60,000 to $100,000. Typical training programs require two years of study, including hands-on training.

More than one path to careers

Post-high school education or training is usually required for most of today's hot jobs.

Careers in therapeutic massage, polarity therapy, and other forms of bodywork and energy therapies, for example, can require 800 hours of rigorous instruction, followed by an internship. This qualifies students to take the national certification exam. So after six months and approximately $6,200 in tuition, qualifying grads head out into a job market that pays, on average, between $35,800 and $54,300 per year.

Harlow Unger, author of "But What If I Don't Want to Go to College? A Guide to Success Through Alternative Education," reports that by 2010 almost two-thirds of all projected job openings will require only on-the-job training. Add to that vocational schools, community colleges, apprenticeships and even military service, and the pathways to fast-growing jobs seem almost unlimited.

What about online learning?

Post-secondary online enrollments have been steadily growing. According to the 2006 report "Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning," almost 3.5 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2006 term; a nearly 10 percent increase over the number reported the previous year.

Two-year associate's institutions have the highest growth rates and account for over one-half of all online enrollments for the last five years. However, they are by no means the only schools in the business of online learning.

In North Carolina, UNC Charlotte offers degree and licensure programs online in the fields of nursing, engineering technology and teacher education (www.distanceed.uncc.edu or toll-free 877-583-2966).

The appeal to students is obvious: convenience. Online learning happens, for the most part, when and where the learner is available. It also provides students access to programs and classes located in far-off locations. Also, academic leaders increasingly believe the quality of online instruction is equal to or superior to that of face-to-face learning—and readily accepted by most potential employers.

Plastic from corn?

Polylactic acid (PLA), a plastic substitute made from fermented plant starch (usually corn), is becoming an alternative to petroleum-based plastics. Proponents also tout the use of PLA—which is technically "carbon neutral" in that it comes from renewable, carbon-absorbing plants—as yet another way to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. PLA also will not emit toxic fumes when incinerated.

But critics say that PLA is far from a panacea for dealing with the world's plastic waste problem. For one, it biodegrades very slowly. Analysts estimate that a PLA bottle could take anywhere from 100 to 1,000 years to decompose in a landfill.

Because it is of different origin than regular plastic, PLA must be kept separate when recycled. PLA needs to head to a composting facility, not a recycling facility, when it has out served its usefulness. (There are only 113 industrial-grade composting facilities across the U.S.)

PLA is made from genetically modified corn, at least in the U.S. The largest producer of PLA in the world is NatureWorks, a subsidiary of Cargill, which is the world's largest provider of genetically modified corn seed.

Instead of PLA bags, grocery shoppers could carry reusable containers, from cloth bags, baskets and backpacks for grocery shopping to safe, reusable (non-plastic) bottles for beverages. As for other types of PLA items—such as those plastic "clamshells" that hold cut fruit—there is no reason to pass them by. But until the kinks are worked out on the disposal and reprocessing end, PLA may not be much better than the plain old plastic it's designed to make obsolete.

To learn more: NatureWorks, www.natureworksllc.com; Smithsonian's "Corn Plastic to the Rescue," www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/plastic.html.

Getty Images, courtesy of Flickr

A cup made from PLA (a plastic made from cornstarch).

Alternatives to pesticides

Getty Images

Some conventional pesticides can harm pets and wildlife.

American homeowners apply 100 million pounds of pesticides each year to make their own gardens grow bigger and faster. But some can poison people, pets and wildlife.

Gardeners can design (or re-design) their gardens to make the most of native plants that have evolved to thrive in local conditions without synthetic aid or lots of water. Choosing native plants appropriate to your elevation, soil type, drainage and sun exposure will naturally repel many common pests and also reduce the propagation of invasive exotic species.

Embedding plants in healthy soil with beneficial insects and worms can also help reduce the need for pesticides. You can compost vegetable food waste—which is chock full of nutrients that plants love—and mix it into existing soil. Rich compost stimulates root development and improves soil texture, aeration and water retention, and provides a home for beneficial bugs.

If pesticides are necessary, there are a handful of organic varieties available. Bacillus thuringiensis ("Bt") is a naturally occurring bacterium that is lethal to most leaf-eating caterpillars on trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables and is harmless to all other insects, animals and humans. It comes in a powder form for use as a dust, or, when diluted with water, as a spray.

To control slugs, The Green Guide suggests recycling the black cell packs that vegetables and annuals are sold in, and placing them (empty) upside down near the base of plants. Each morning, check the containers for pests, and if you find any, simply throw the container away with the pests inside. Another easy slug control method is to use hollowed out grapefruit rinds in a similar manner around the base of plants.

Pet owners may already be familiar with insecticidal soaps used to control fleas. Some of these soaps can also be used in the garden to repel insects. For more information, consult a local nursery specializing in organic methods and native plants. Find one near you via the free online Native Plants Nursery Directory.

To learn more: The Green Guide, www.thegreenguide.com; MainStreet.com, www.mainstreet.com; Native Plants Nursery Directory, www.plantnative.org/national_nursery_dir_main.htm

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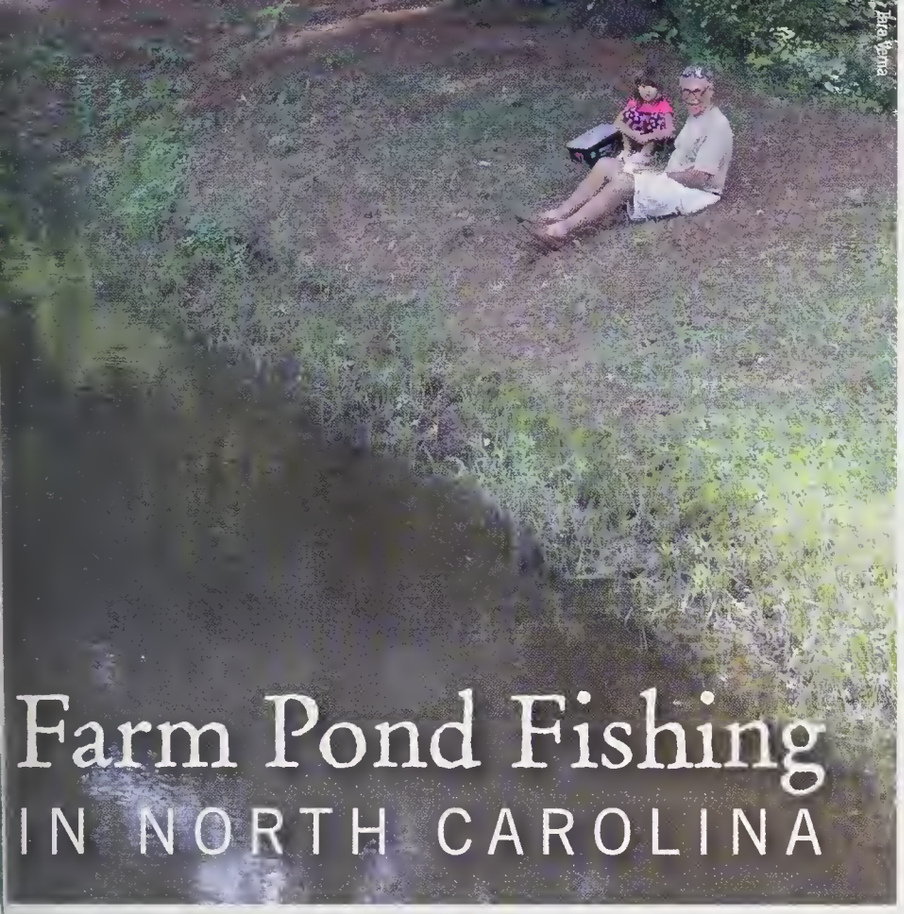

Tara Verna

Farm Pond Fishing IN NORTH CAROLINA

Wetting a line in farm ponds brings a pleasure unlike rivers, streams, lakes and saltwater

By Joe Zentner

Farm ponds are one of North Carolina's most valuable aquatic resources. A pond can serve as a water source for livestock, aid in fire protection and attract wildlife. One of a farm pond's most enjoyable functions is that of providing hours of profitable fishing opportunities for young and old alike.

The farm pond is something of an American institution. We've been building ponds and stocking them with fish for about as long as there have been farms in this country. And for good reason. For a small outlay of cash and labor, a pond not only provides an enterprising homesteader with a means of home fish production, but also furnishes water for livestock and crops, creates wildlife habitats, offers a source of recreation and adds an aesthetically pleasing element to property.

A farm pond is generally defined by its earthen bottom, which may consist of a number of different soil types, size (a fifth-acre or larger), and the species of fish that it holds, such as bass, bluegill, catfish or trout. Farm ponds can be used for both swimming and fishing.

I have spent many hours at North Carolina ponds named after their owners—Harrison's, Black's, Eubank's, Long's, Pitchford's, Blanco's, Authement's—and many others. All had their own personality, and over time I developed different ways to fish each. Harvesting is done by hook, bobber, sinker and line, and the fish are generally intended for home use rather than for sale. One thing in common to all farm ponds is the need to get wet while fishing. I have oftentimes waded, sometimes nearly up to my neck, to get to ideal fishing spots.

Stocking

Farmers and wildlife experts have over the years experimented with various fish combinations for pond stocking and have found largemouth bass and bluegill to be an ideal combination for most North Carolina waters. The largemouth bass, the top predator in Tar Heel ponds, is the largest member of the sunfish family, which also includes bluegills.

While the average size of an adult largemouth bass is only two to three pounds, fish up to six pounds or even larger are sometimes seen in North Carolina farm ponds. In fact, the North Carolina record largemouth bass of 13 pounds, 2 ounces was caught from a farm pond in 1976.

Bluegills are not only important as food for largemouths, but are also very popular among anglers for both sport and the table. Big bluegills are the pond fish most eager to bite and always put up a good fight on light tackle.

Channel catfish are most at home in North Carolina streams, lakes and reservoirs, but do often grow to considerable size when stocked in farm ponds. These fish are primarily bottom feeders, preferring insects, crayfish, small fish and, occasionally, aquatic plants. North Carolina anglers typically catch channel catfish in the 14- to 16-inch size range, but fish up to 30 inches are not at all uncommon.

Another fish that is occasionally stocked in farm ponds is the grass carp, used to control nuisance aquatic vegetation.

Fishing

There are a few key baits that I use to catch pond bass. These fish don't get much pressure but you do have to "match the hatch," as North Carolina anglers say. If shiners are around, cast something that resembles them. Make sure you don't throw something the fish have never seen. My key baits that work just about anywhere are live worms, plastic worms, crankbaits and Basstrix Swimbaits. These baits resemble what are found in many ponds, including bluegill and crawdads.

I fish farm ponds using a light tackle rod in order get a good fight from the bass that hit. However, you do run the chance of losing a big bass with a light outfit on a pond. Some monster bass are found in many farm ponds and there is often considerable cover for them to get your line tangled up in.

Etiquette

If you ever get the chance to fish a farm pond, do so. The main thing you need do is get permission to fish them. If there are posted signs around saying "No Trespassing," then ask the owner if you can.

Remember to release most of the fish you catch. This keeps the fish in the ponds and insures they will be there the next time you wet a line.

Joe Zentner is a retired political science professor, who frequently fishes on North Carolina farm ponds.

Tara Verna

Bluegills are the pond fish most eager to bite.

Memories

Art by Ronald Ragland

"Memories" is the latest print by artist Ronald Ragland. It depicts his father, Hugh T. Ragland (right), working a tobacco field with his associate Albert Downey and his mule George, while others in the background put tobacco in the curing barns. Ronald Ragland says the scene is along Durham Road in Granville County where he grew up, but he painted the original opaque watercolor from memory, adding "Those barns, I had to build them, and that tobacco, I had to plant it in the field. I didn't have a picture to go by."

A commercial artist for 40 years, Ronald Ragland now lives in Raleigh. Signed prints of "Memories," measuring 16 by 20 inches, are available in full color on museum-quality paper, for $60 (includes shipping).

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Getting To Know...

Carla Overbeck

Born: Carla Werden on May 9, 1969

Known for: Soccer defense player and captain for the U.S. women's team

Accomplishments: Overbeck played on four NCAA championship teams while attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received All-American honors her sophomore, junior and senior years there. Considered one of the most prolific players in the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team history, Overbeck appeared in 168 national team contests. Overbeck overcame Graves Disease and knee surgery to make her mark. She served as a member of the U.S. team that won the inaugural 1991 Women's World Cup in China and as captain of the gold-medal winning U.S. Women's National Team at the 1996 Centennial Olympics.

In her collegiate coaching debut, Carla Overbeck made an immediate impact on the Duke University women's soccer program, helping the 1992 Blue Devils advance to the NCAA title game. Overbeck continues to serve as an assistant coach at Duke and was elected to the National Soccer Hall of Fame in 2006. Married with two children, Overbeck is also the author of the "Soccer Moms' Cookbook" and lives in Chapel Hill.

N.C. Inventors IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Everybody has a great idea that could change the way we work, play and live. "Everyday Edisons," a public TV show that airs on UNC-TV and WTVI, tells the stories of new inventors and shows how their ideas go from rough sketch to product shelf. Featured inventors come from all over the U.S., but at least five this season live in North Carolina. Charlotte high school students and brothers Cody and Mark Fox created a plastic-infused, protective textbook cover now used in schools nationwide. Randy Hatfield and Joe Simmons, both of New Bern, invented CordX, a way to reduce electrical wires clutter. James Jenkins of Winston-Salem solved a common shopping problem with his hands-free bag carrier. Way to go, guys! The show is airing through mid-September. For more about the show, visit www.everydayedisons.com. For TV air times, visit www.unctv.org and www.wtvi.org.

Flower POWER

This is a quick, fun and inexpensive project for home or the classroom.

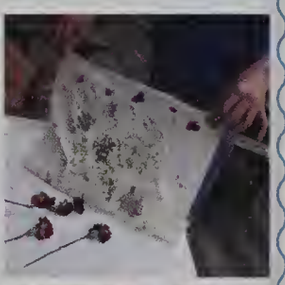
MATERIALS

Flowers (the more colorful the better)

Hammer (see note)

Scissors

White or light-colored cloth (handkerchiefs and T-shirts work well)



Large paper (if you use newspaper, make sure its ink won't transfer)

Spread paper across a level surface, then put cloth on top. Snip blooms and place them on the cloth. Hammer each bloom several times, then slowly peel bloom from cloth. Its color remains behind to create interesting shapes.

Note: Hammers aren't mandatory. Kids can "hammer" blooms with their hands. Cover the blooms first with clear wrap.

Online courses available

Launched this year, North Carolina Virtual Public School, or NCVPS, offers advanced online courses. The program targets public schools and is particularly helpful to students in rural or poorer areas who seek academic opportunities that may not be available. Online services also include test preparation and career planning. For more, visit www.ncvps.org. North Carolina public high school students can also earn free college credits through Learn & Earn Online. Visit www.ncpublicschools.org/learnandearnonline.

classroom chuckle

Teacher: Why are you doing your math problems on the floor?

Student: You told me to do it without using tables!

SURF IT!

Inventors' Network of the Carolinas: http://portal.inotc.org/

Innovators, discoveries and new inventions: www.ideafinder.com

U.S. men & women's soccer: http://ussoccer.com

Surgery Can't Fix Dark Circles!

Finally, researchers have developed the first product to combine a clinically proven compound to reduce those dark under-eye circles and simultaneously reduce fine lines and wrinkles, resulting in noticeably younger looking eyes.

—By Sarah Tucker

I can't tell you how often I'm told that I look tired because of the dark circles under my eyes. I guess some people don't realize how embarrassing this is... I have been plagued with dark circles since my early 20s! But finally I don't have to worry about them anymore since I found Hydrolyze[H].

Solves Two Beauty Problems At Once!

Hydrolyze[H] was created by one of America's premier anti-aging skin care companies. They have succeeded at creating the first intensive eye cream to effectively combat not one but TWO of the most aggravating beauty problems... under-eye dark circles and wrinkles.

Contains Haloxyl™† AND Matrixyl™ 3000‡

Hydrolyze[H] works so well at making your eyes look younger and brighter because it combines the most effective leading ingredient for reducing serious dark circles and bags, Haloxyl™†, with Matrixyl™ 3000‡, the most advanced anti-wrinkle ingredient known to science, proven to reduce visible deep wrinkles by up to 68%. You can't help but see and feel a noticeable difference after just a few weeks.

Why Dark Circles Form In The First Place

Despite what most people think, deep, dark circles under your eyes are not primarily caused by being tired or stressed. Instead, dermatologists and plastic surgeons agree that dark circles are caused by capillaries that leak blood close to the skin's surface. When this blood begins to oxidize, it turns a bluish red color, similar to an ugly bruise. And since the skin under the eyes is very thin, this leads to the appearance of those embarrassing bags and dark circles. The more transparent your skin and the more blood that pools under it, the darker the circles appear. And what's worse, this discoloration over time can become permanent!

Helps Reduce & Prevent Dark Circles

In scientific studies, Hydrolyze's main active ingredient, Haloxyl™†, has been shown to help reduce the leaked blood under the skin (or "hemoglobin degradation by-products" as the plastic surgeons say) by using a series of natural enzymes that break down the blood and cause the dark circles to fade. In fact, Haloxyl™† is so effective because it actually helps strengthen the capillaries to help prevent them from leaking in the first place.

Need Proof?

In a double-blind clinical trial more than 72% of women who had serious dark circles and used Haloxyl™† saw an obvious visible reduction in the dark color under their eyes. These findings were confirmed using high-speed laboratory photography that clearly showed a significant reduction in the appearance of the blue and red color that make up dark eye circles.

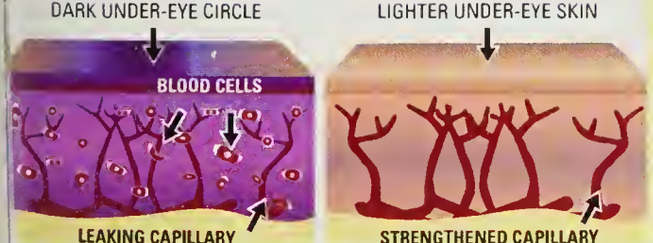
With Matrixyl™ 3000‡, The Most Advanced Wrinkle Reducer Known To Science

Hydrolyze[H] is so effective at making your eyes look so much younger because it also includes one of the most effective wrinkle reducing compounds ever produced, Matrixyl™ 3000‡. Due to its advanced wrinkle fighting technology, this clinically proven compound actually stimulates collagen production to help reduce the appearance of visible deep wrinkles by 68% and increase the firmness of your skin after only two months. All natural Hydrolyze[H] was designed to be safe and gentle enough for everyday use.

"The skin around the eyes is thin, and thus susceptible to dark circles. Surgery can not eliminate dark circles. Hydrolyze not only reduces the appearance of dark circles and bags but also helps prevent them."

–Dr. Michael Fiorillo is a world renowned board certified plastic and reconstructive surgeon.

How Hydrolyze[H] Under Eye Treatment® Reduces Dark Circles



Before – Dark circles form under the eyes due to weakened capillaries that leak blood close to the skin's surface.

After – Hydrolyze's active ingredient, Haloxyl™†, uses natural enzymes to help break down leaked blood under the skin and strengthen the capillaries to help prevent further blood leakage. Eyes appear brighter and younger.

Having A Hard Time Finding Hydrolyze[H] Under Eye Treatment®?

Until now Hydrolyze[H] has only been available through plastic surgeons' offices in New York and Beverly Hills. But now you can experience first hand the unique results of Hydrolyze[H] in combating both dark circles and wrinkles without a visit to a doctor.

The makers of Hydrolyze[H] are so confident in their anti-aging technology, they're offering a 30-Day Risk Free Trial...because seeing is believing! To get your 30-day supply of Hydrolyze[H] risk free, for just a small s&h fee, call now. Our operators are ready to let you try one of the greatest breakthroughs in fighting dark circles and wrinkles.

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UNC Basketball Museum

The University of North Carolina Basketball Museum, which chronicles the history of UNC basketball through videos, photos and artifacts, is now open on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (except on UNC holidays). The museum has attracted nearly 25,000 visitors since it opened this past January. Basketball fans can see nearly 500 authentic artifacts, hundreds of photographs, and videos of various players, coaches, championships and other historic moments. The museum, located on the first floor of Ernie Williamson Athletics Center adjacent to the Dean Smith Center, is open each Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Officials plan to post on the Web site www.TarHeelBlue.com other museum hours for special dates such as home football Saturdays and home basketball games. To schedule a group of 20 or more, call Clara Andrews at (919) 843-9921.

(888) 968-2060 (Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau)
www.carolinabasketballmuseum.com

New at the zoo

The North Carolina Zoo has added a new experience: The SpongeBob SquarePants™ 4D Ride. Patrons young and old can strap on seat belts and join SpongeBob in pursuit of a runaway pickle. The family-oriented 4D Ride Theater combines top-quality 3-D visual effects, 4-D physical effects and 4-D environmental effects. In this undersea adventure, riders accompany SpongeBob as he chases his best friend Patrick through Bikini Bottom, and will really "feel" the surprise ending. The ride is near Kid Zone and costs $3 per person in addition to regular admission. The zoo, located in Asheboro and served by Randolph EMC, also recently expanded its elephant and rhinoceros exhibits. The Watani Grasslands Reserve, a 40-acre African Plains habitat, features ostriches and gazelles.

800-488-0444
www.nczoo.org

Specialty trout products

Founded in 1948, Sunburst Trout Company has been family-owned and operated for three generations. The operation, based in Canton and served by Haywood EMC, sells a variety of specialty trout products. The company's water source comes from the federally protected Shining Rock Wilderness Area, and Sunburst says its trout contain no mercury, PCB's or pesticides. Products include premium cut fillets hot-smoked from hickory and grapevine clippings, trout chowder, trout cakes, smoked trout dip and exotic rainbow trout caviar. Gift boxes include the Lake Logan sampler with one smoked trout dip, a 2-ounce jar of caviar, one whole smoked trout and one portion-cut smoked trout. (When caviar is out of season, one cold smoked side and one tray of trout sausage is substituted.) It sells for $79.99. The company sells online and also in stores such as Whole Foods and Fresh Market.

(800) 673-3051
www.sunbursttrout.com

Guide to state parks

North Carolina's State Parks reported record attendance in 2007. "North Carolina State Parks: A Niche Guide" features photographs and key information about North Carolina's state parks, recreation and natural areas as well as soon-to-be opened parks and natural areas. Organized by Mountains, Piedmont and Coastal Plain, each entry includes a general site description of the park or area, location, GPS coordinates, amenities and unique features. Co-authors Ida Phillips Lynch of Chapel Hill and Bill Pendergraft, formerly of Chapel Hill, also provide safety tips, a list of nearby natural areas and links to related Web sites. Published by Niche Publishing LLC in Chapel Hill, and distributed by publisher John F. Blair in Winston-Salem. Softcover, 185 color photographs, 123 pages, $14.95.

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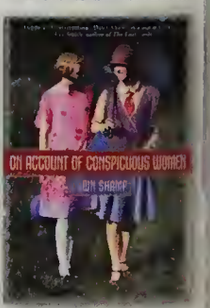
"On Account of Conspicuous Women"



Set in Roxboro in the 1920s, this novel follows the dreams and actions of four young Southern women who unite during the women's suffrage movement. Bertie is a fashionable, outspoken telephone operator and bribes men with roasted peanuts so they'll listen to her. Debutante Ina is a newcomer to Roxboro. Her husband died on their honeymoon and she's now supporting herself. Guerine is an only child of a distant businessman and chronically fatigued mom and likes to be the center of attention. Farm girl Doodle enjoys reciting Keats but keeps her writing dreams under wraps, along with her dad's deathbed secrets. Together, the four realize they can achieve almost anything. Writer Dawn Shamp lives in Durham. Published by St. Martin's Press in New York (publisher doesn't sell book directly). Hardcover, 306 pages, $23.95.

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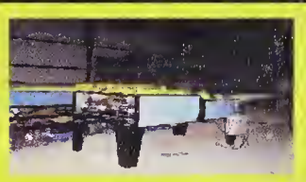

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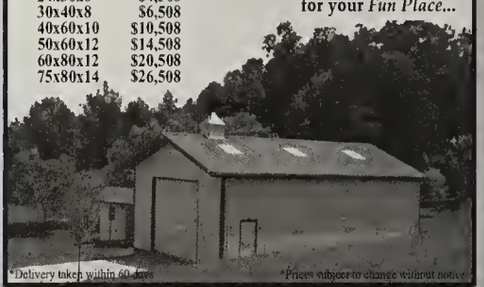

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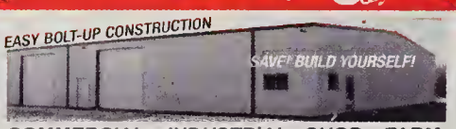

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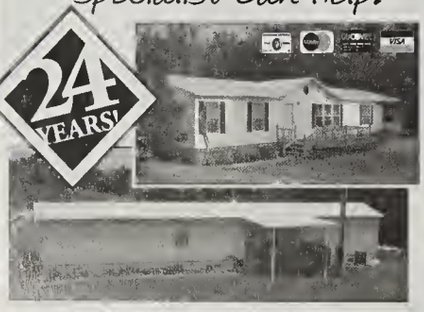

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—Asheville Citizen-Times (5/17/08)

Give us a brake, Thurman.

Oh, Kay!

UNSCRAMBLIT

n	m	a	s	b	u	e	d	r	u	e	c	m	a	l

You will find a hidden word above when you match these boxes with the boxes to the right.

A	C	G	I	L	N	O	R	S	T	U
u	n	s	c	r	a	m	b	l	e	d

ENIGMA

	G			N	E
	I	N	M	A	G
G			A		M
M		I			N
N	E	A	G	M	
I	M			E	

Complete this grid so that every column, every row, and every 2 x 3 box contains the six letters in the word ENIGMA. No repeats.

LIGHT VERSE

There was an old man from down south,
who suffered a terrible drouth.
One evening while at rest
he chewed up his mattress
and awoke feeling down in the mouth.

—cgj

For answers, please see page 34

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$225,000	$1,190.72	30YR. FIXED	4.87%	5.07%
$300,000	$1,406.25	30YR./10 IO	5.62%	5.80%

Samples are **Fixed Rate** conforming loans for 70 LTV rate/term transactions and 720 FICO scores. *Home Equity loan is interest only payment, 2nd lien at 80 LTV. All products allow principle payments at any time without penalty. All rates and terms subject to change with market conditions. Other rates, Terms and Products available. Call about Cash Out, Debt Consolidation, JUMBO Loans, Double Wides/Land, Reduced Documentation, an more. Ask about our 40, 20, 15 and 10 year terms!

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A	E	N	G	M	I
I	M	G	A	E	N
N	G	E	I	A	M
M	I	A	E	N	G
G	A	M	N	I	E
E	N	I	M	G	A

Unscrambled

CONGRATULATIONS

August Events

The Mountain Men Tractor Pullers events at the WNC Ag. Center in Fletcher are open to anyone who wants to compete and watch. They run antique tractors, stock pick-up trucks and exhibition tractors. The next one is Aug. 2. (828) 665-9814. Web: http://mtnmentractorpullers.com

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through Aug.14
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www.thelostcolony.org

Under His Wings"
ove story of Ruth and Boaz
mmerich Theatre
denton, through Aug. 16
252) 482-4621
ww.rockyhockplayhouse.com

Brilliant Period of American Cut Glass
Mint Museum
Charlotte, through Aug. 17
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

"Romeo and Juliet"
Carolinian Shakespeare Festival
New Bern, through Aug. 17
252) 633-0567
www.csfest.net

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www.historichendersonville.org

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Kings Mountain, through Aug. 23
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www.kingsmountainmuseum.org

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Winston-Salem, through Aug. 23
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www.secca.org

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Seagrove, through Aug. 23
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www.ncpotterycenter.com

Flora and Fauna
Hertford, through Aug. 27
(252) 426-1432

OSS: Office of Strategic Services
Display explains origins of the OSS
Fayetteville, Through Sept. 1
(910) 643-2766
www.asomf.org

Farmers Market
Saturdays through Sept. 27
Kings Mountain
(704) 730-0283
www.foothillsfarmersmarket.com

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Albemarle region artifacts
Through December, Elizabeth City
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www.museumofthealbemarle.com

1

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www.biltmore.com

Summer Night Stroll
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Lexington
(336) 249-0383
www.uptownlexington.com

Pro Rodeo
Level Cross, August 1–2
(704) 882-6994

2

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http://mtnmentractorpullers.com

Jarman Opry Theater
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New Bern
(252) 636-6225

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Western harmony and comedy
Tweetsie Railroad, Blowing Rock
(800) 526-5740
www.blowingrock.com

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(828) 450-1438
www.biltmore.com

Pan for Gold!
Huntersville
(704) 875-2312
www.lattaplantation.org

Meat Goat Symposium
(Register by July 31)
Pavilion, Petersburg, Va.
(757) 514-4330

3

Arts Splash Concert
Likewise Jazz Trio
High Point
(336) 889-2787
www.highpointarts.org

Design House Tour at Bayside Manor
Elizabeth City, Aug. 3–17
(252) 339-2418
www.baysidemanortour.com

5

Prime of Life Festival
Senior products, services
Spindale
(864) 201-2464

Summer Kids Club
(828) 433-4772
www.ncparks.gov

6

Charity Horse Show
Blowing Rock
(828) 295-4700

The Stepcrew
Concert
Asheville, Biltmore House
(828) 450-1438
www.biltmore.com

"Bloody Mary & The Virgin Queen"
Manteo, Aug. 6–13
Humorous musical farce
(252) 475-1500
www.roanokeisland,com

7

An Evening with Gladys Knight
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(828) 450-1438
www.biltmore.com

William Price
Author of Nathaniel Macon book
Oxford
(919) 693-9706
www.granvillemuseumnc.org

8

Bluegrass Festival
Troy, Aug. 8 & 9
(704) 985-6987
www.biglickbluegrass.com

An Evening with B.B. King
Biltmore House, Asheville
(828) 450-1438
www.biltmore.com

9

Tarboro's Second Saturdays
Street Fair
Tarboro
(252) 823-0918
www.gotarboro.com/2sat

National Airborne Day
Parachute Test Anniversary
Fayetteville
(910) 483-3003
www.asomf.org

Mayberry Nights with The Darlings
Tribute Look Alikes
Troy
(704) 985-6987

Bridal Fair
Shelby
(864) 201-2464
www.foothillsbridalfair.com

Sourwood Festival
Black Mountain, Aug. 9–10
(828) 669-2300
www.exploreblackmountain.com

An Evening with REO Speedwagon
Biltmore House, Asheville
(828) 450-1438
www.biltmore.com

Pro Bull Riding & Fighting
Smithfield
(919) 550-9386

10

Arts Splash Concert
Dub Addis plays roots reggae
High Point
(336) 889-2787
www.highpointarts.org

Highland Pipes and Drums
Blowing Rock
(828) 295-7851
www.blowingrock.com

14

Pine Needle Basket Workshop
Beaufort
(252) 728-5225

15

An Evening with The Beach Boys
Biltmore House, Asheville
(828) 450-1438
www.biltmore.com

Guild Craft Show
Brevard
(828) 884-9908

Pro Rodeo
Lake Waccamaw, Aug. 15–16
(704) 882-6994

Quilt Show
Lincolnton, Aug. 15–16
(704) 735-0751

Hot Nights, Cool Rides
Cruise-in car show, music and food
Forest City, Aug. 15–16
(828) 247-4430
www.forestcityevents.com

Civil War Encampment
Boiling Springs, Aug. 15–17
(704) 434-2357
www.broadrivergreenway.com

16

The Tams
Lawn Concert Series
Linden
(910) 321-9463
www.jwesleyvineyards.com

Benefit Auction
Brasstown
(828) 837-2775
www.folkschool.org

Pan for Gold!
Huntersville
(704) 875-2312
www.lattaplantation.org

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Food, music
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Shelby, Aug. 16 & 23
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With more than 250 waterfalls, this area is awash in natural splendor. Its granite faces attract rock climbers. Kayakers relish its whitewater. Transylvania ("trans" for "across" and "sylvan" for "woods") has the highest waterfall in the eastern United States, Whitewater Falls, and North Carolina's newest state park, "Gorges," in Sapphire.

In Brevard, you might spy a white squirrel. Lore has it the rare creatures leapt from an overturned carnival truck in the late 1940s and their offspring have delighted folks since. Brevard's Music Center vibrates with orchestra and chamber concerts, while several coffeehouses keep students stoked. Popular restaurants include Pescados for tasty burritos.

A corridor of talented crafters lies along US Hwy. 276 between Brevard and the South Carolina line. Stop by to see them working in their studios. Another interesting side trip off Hwy. 276 is the trout hatchery and adjacent Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education on Forest Service Road 475. From Hwy 276 and Forest Service Road 475 junction, go about 0.3 mile on Hwy. 276 to the pullout for Looking Glass Falls, a 60-foot cascade. About a mile past is a parking area with a 0.7 mile trail to Moore Cove Falls. There, you can walk behind its cooling cascade.

Check out traditional mountain music at the Songcatchers Music Series, Cradle of Forestry.

Three top spots:

Sliding Rock: A well-worn favorite, kids and kids-at-heart slide down a big, wet rock slab into a bracing pool. A bathhouse is open through mid-August. 7.5 miles north of Hwy 64 on Hwy 276. $1 per person. (828) 877-3350.

Transylvania Heritage Museum: It features heirlooms, genealogical exhibits and vintage family photographs, along with a separate section dedicated to native Jim Bob Tinsley. Tinsley toured with cowboy star Gene Autry and set the one-day record for sailfish caught. The late author/entertainer/photographer's life is chronicled through cowboy collectibles, Indian artifacts and his books. Brevard. Free. (828) 884-2347 or www.Jimbobtinsleymuseum.org

Cradle of Forestry: This unique attraction educates visitors about the birth of sustainable forestry management. You can see a logging locomotive, an old schoolhouse, old-time forestry students' quarters and craft demonstrations. Off Hwy 276, 14 miles northeast of Brevard. $5 for adults. (828) 877-3130 or www.cradleofforestry.com

Learn of other nearby adventures and events:

(800) 648-4523
www.visitwaterfalls.com

17

Summer Breeze Concert
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www.highpointarts.org

19

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21

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Back to School Bash
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www.uptownshelby.org

Art, History & Wine Trolley Tour
Shelby
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www.travellynxtours.com

22

Fourth Friday
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(910) 323-1776
www.theartscouncil.com

Bluegrass Jam
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(828) 627-6396

23

UMOJA Festival
African-American cultural festival
Fayetteville
(910) 488-7130

Civil War Infantry
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(704) 875-2312
www.lattaplantation.org

Scratch and Sniff
Guided hike
Chimney Rock Park
(828) 245-1492
www.chimneyrockpark.com

24

Bull Bash
Rodeo
Elizabeth City
(252) 339-2246

Al & Amy
Acoustic duo
Manteo
(252) 475-1500
www.roanokeisland.com

26

Agricultural Fair
Burlington, Aug. 26–30
(336) 228-6106

28

Sundown in Downtown
The Band of Oz
Benson
(919) 989-8687
www.johnstoncountync.org

29

Littleton/Lake Gaston Festival
Littleton
(252) 586-5959
www.littletonlakegastonfestival.com

Treasures of the Earth
Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show
Raleigh, Aug. 29–31
(804) 746-7663

Studio Tour, Sale
Blowing Rock, Aug. 29-31
(828) 295-8042
www.blowingrock.com

30

Redbone Willy's Bluegrass & Peddler's Festival
Lawndale
(704) 538-3670
www.redbonewilly.com

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Step-back-in time tour
Murphy
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By Carla Burgess

Is your yard wildlife-worthy?

Does your garden provide food, water, shelter and nesting habitat for birds and other wildlife? Do you conserve water or use other eco-friendly practices? You might qualify to be recognized as a National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat. The NWF hosts the program to recognize homeowners who create wildlife habitats in their yards and gardens. The requirements include some simple, everyday contributions you may already be making in your garden, such as providing feeders, birdbaths, nesting boxes, shrubs, and wildflowers or using rain barrels and composting yard waste and kitchen scraps. To see how you measure up, visit www.nwf.org/backyard, e-mail info@nwf.org or call 1-800-822-9919. For a registration fee of $15, you'll receive a certificate, NWF membership and magazine subscription, and your name will be entered in a national registry of certified habitats. You can also purchase an attractive, weatherproof "Certified Wildlife Habitat" sign to show off your commitment.

Pruning to achieve the best flowering

If you've noticed diminished or lack of blooming on flowering shrubs, you might be pruning them at the wrong time. Shrubs such as forsythia, bigleaf hydrangea, azalea, weigela and lorapetalum produce flowers on "old wood"—or growth from the previous season. Vines like honeysuckle, Carolina jessamine and spring-blooming clematis also bloom on old wood. These plants should be pruned soon after flowering to prevent loss of buds for the next year. Shrubs that bloom on new wood—the current season's growth—may be pruned in late summer, fall or winter. These include butterfly bush, American beautyberry, gardenia and rose of Sharon. Butterfly bush in particular benefits from a hard pruning in late winter to encourage vigorous new growth. Beautyberry may also be cut back substantially to produce more of the flowers that will produce the beautiful, purple fall berries. For a list of when to prune many popular species, visit http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/HGIC1053.htm. For the hows and whys of all types of pruning, check out www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/factsheets/shrubs/text/pruning.html.

Seed saving 101

To learn when and how to gather seeds from popular garden plants, from corn and beans to zinnias and sunflowers, check out this article: www.seedsavers.org/instructions.html. A great print resource is *Seed to Seed* (Second Edition) by Suzanne Ashworth. This 228-page book is a complete seed-saving guide that describes specific techniques for saving seeds of 160 different kinds of vegetables. It describes how to harvest, dry, clean and store seeds. This book is available from Seed Savers Exchange for $24.95, with discounts for multiple copies. For additional information, visit www.seedsaversexchange.org, or call (563) 382-5990.

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Simple, everyday garden contributions, from composting to providing bird feeders, may allow your yard to be recognized as a National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat.

Hort Shorts

- To divide iris, lift entire clumps and shake off excess dirt. Cut leaves back by one-half to one-third. Using a sharp knife, cut the rhizomes (rootstock) into sections, with each new transplant including a "fan" of leaves, a few inches of firm, plump rhizome, and several roots. Discard outer sections of rhizome and any small pieces. (Be on the lookout for any holes in the rhizomes. These are signs of borer caterpillars, a common iris pest that tunnels through rhizomes. Remove caterpillars with a knife, and discard heavily infested rhizomes.) To replant irises, dig a shallow hole, mound the soil in the center and spread roots downward around it. Plant so that the top of the rhizome is visible at the soil surface.
- To divide daylilies, lift clumps with a garden fork. Shake off dirt and look for natural divisions at the base of the leaf fans. Separate these with a sharp knife or spade. Trim foliage back by about two-thirds and replant individual clumps. You may wish to trim the roots some also.
- Direct-sow seeds of quick-flowering annuals like zinnias, sunflowers and marigolds now for color until frost.
- Don't fuss over feeding cosmos—they prefer infertile soil. Over-fertilizing produces lush foliage at the expense of bloom.
- During hot, dry weather, survey your perennial flowers to see which ones are thriving. Think about how you can fill in bare spots, where plants have succumbed, with hardier selections.

Carla Burgess can be reached at ncgardenshare@mindspring.com.

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For more gardening advice, go to the "Carolina Gardens" section of www.carolinacountry.com.

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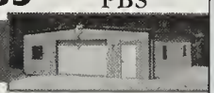

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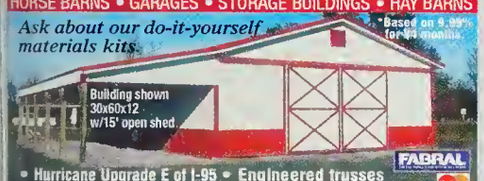

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By James Dulley

New patio doors cut noise and drafts

Older, sliding patio doors can be inefficient, causing homeowners to experience warm air in summer, cold air in winter, drafts and outdoor noise. In a home of average efficiency, that one old sliding glass door can waste more energy year-round than all the walls in that room combined.

The heat is lost during winter and gained during summer as a result of the air leakage and the conduction losses through the glass itself, a double energy loss. First, the old inefficient patio door wastes energy as described above. Second, this inefficiency often makes you set the central thermostat higher during winter or lower during summer just to stay comfortable. Each degree you change the thermostat setting can result in greater costs on your utility bills.

There have been tremendous improvements in energy efficiency, security and styling of replacement patio doors. Some of the new high-tech glass in these doors has an insulation valve as high as R-10 in the center of the glass. It has special coatings on the glass surface that reduce heat transfer and block the majority of the sun's ultraviolet rays. This can greatly extend like-new appearance and the actual life of your carpeting and furniture.

From what many homeowners have told me, the first thing their family notices when a new efficient patio door is installed is the reduced outdoor noise. Noise enters a home through a door by two channels. Much of the noise comes through the glass panes, but a significant amount also comes from air leakage around the frame and the seals. Resilient weather-stripping greatly reduces air leakage and multi-pane glass—with heavy inert gas between the panes—blocks sound transmission.

Although any type of efficient door can be installed in place of the old patio door, most people replace an old sliding glass door with either another sliding door or French doors. Each has its advantages depending upon your desired balance between functionality and style. The costs of these two types of doors are not significantly different and the installation time is similar.

Hinged French doors are more stylish and are particularly popular today. Hinged doors close on a compression weather-stripping seal, often making French doors more airtight. Sliding doors rely on noncompression types of weather-stripping. Even though it is not as airtight as a compression seal, it will be better than an older patio door.

French doors are easy to swing open, but they do require a fairly large open area for swinging clearance. A sliding door just slides in its track so it requires no open clearance area. Sliding doors also provide a more unobstructed view of the outdoors. There is a little more maintenance on a sliding door to keep its track clean so it glides open and closes easily.

Most door manufacturers allow you to order almost any type of glass you want. The best type of glass for your home depends upon factors such as your climate, orientation to the sun and natural shading. In general, the minimum efficiency level you should select is double-pane glass with a low-emissivity coating and argon gas between the panes.

This sliding patio door has pine interior and a no-maintenance aluminum-clad exterior. It is designed with a contemporary narrow-stile frame for more viewing area.

Even more efficient, but more expensive, is triple-pane glass or double-pane glass with low-emissivity plastic films stretched between them. Selecting optional krypton gas instead of argon gas in the gap between the panes improves efficiency and reduces outdoor sound transmission. This is because krypton gas is denser than argon gas. Both are inert gases, so they are very stable.

The frame material is also important for efficiency and smooth operation. A pultruded fiberglass frame is very strong and stable. Its strength allows for narrower frame profiles and more glass area. Fiberglass frames can be ordered with a real oak wood veneer on the indoor surfaces. The exterior is painted.

Vinyl door frames reinforced with internal steel supports are good insulators, maintenance-free, and reasonably priced. The corners are fusion welded for extra strength and a clean appearance. Solid wood frames are attractive and strong, but they require regular maintenance. Choosing one with exterior vinyl or aluminum cladding minimizes this maintenance.

James Dulley is an engineer and syndicated columnist for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

The following companies offer efficient patio doors:

Champion Window (800) 875-5575
www.championwindow.com

Fibertec (888) 232-4956
www.fibertec.com

Peachtree (800) 732-2499
www.peachtreedoor.com

Simonton (800) 746-6686
www.simonton.com

Weathershield (800) 222-2995
www.weathershield.com

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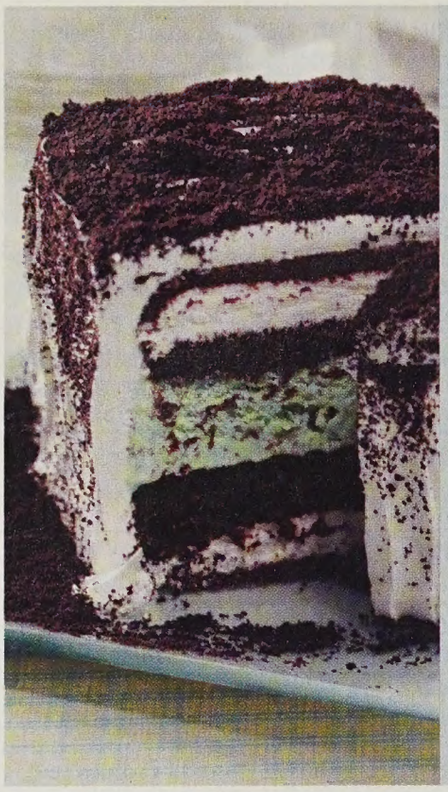

Mint-Chocolate Ice Cream Cake

- 1 package (16 ounces) Suzy Q's
- 3 cups mint chocolate chip ice cream, softened
- 12 cream-filled chocolate sandwich cookies, crushed, divided
- 2 cups whipped topping
- ½ teaspoon mint extract, optional

Line an 8-by-4-by-2-inch loaf pan with plastic wrap. Place four Suzy-Q's in pan, completely covering the bottom. Spread ice cream over Suzy-Q's; sprinkle with half of the cookie crumbs. Press remaining Suzy O's on top. Cover and freeze for at least 3 hours.

Just before serving, remove from the freezer and invert onto a serving plate. Carefully remove the pan and plastic wrap.

Combine whipped topping and extract if desired; frost top and sides of cake. Sprinkle with remaining cookie crumbs.

Yield: 10 servings

Bow Ties with Asparagus and Prosciutto

- 1 package (16 ounces) bow tie pasta
- 1½ cups heavy whipping cream
- 1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons water
- ½ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 6 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto or deli ham, cut into strips

Cook pasta according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, bring cream to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 6–7 minutes or until slightly thickened.

Place asparagus and water in a microwave-safe dish. Cover; microwave on high for 3–4 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain.

Drain pasta and place in a large serving bowl. Add the cream, asparagus, Parmesan cheese and prosciutto; toss to coat.

Yield: 6 servings

Winning reader recipe

Gold Miners Pie

- ¼ cup margarine
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese
- 1 package (7 ounces) coconut
- ½ cup pecans
- 1 large (16 ounces) Cool Whip
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 jar caramel ice cream topping
- 3 graham cracker pie shells

Melt margarine, add pecans and coconut; cook until coconut browns and then let this mixture cool. While this mixture is cooling, mix cream cheese, milk and Cool Whip together; divide and put this mixture into the pie shells. Drizzle the ice cream topping on top of Cool Whip mixture. Top with pecan, coconut mixture. Cover the pies and freeze.

Mrs. Dannie Hill of Lumbee River EMC in Laurinburg Council will receive $25 for submitting this recipe.

Cucumber Tea Sandwiches

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon snipped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 2 large cucumbers, seeded and chopped
- ½ cup chopped sweet red pepper
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ¼ cup pimiento-stuffed olives, chopped
- ¼ cup minced fresh parsley
- 12 slices whole wheat bread
- Cucumber slices and fresh dill sprigs, optional

In a small mixing bowl, combine the first eight ingredients; beat until blended. Stir in the cucumbers, red pepper, onion, olives and parsley. Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 hours.

Remove the crusts from bread; cut each slice into four triangles. Spread with cream cheese mixture. Garnish with cucumber slices and dill sprigs if desired.

Yield: 4 dozen

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